

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR
THE UNITED STATES GOVERN-
MENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009—
CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate having received a message from the House of Representatives, the House has agreed to the conference report to accompany Senate Con. Res. 70. The vote of the Senate taken on June 4, 2008, with respect to this matter, is ratified.

CONSUMERS FIRST ENERGY ACT
OF 2008—MOTION TO PROCEED—
Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana is recognized.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I rise to discuss this very important climate change legislation and amendments I would have brought to the Senate floor for consideration. Now, unfortunately, I said "would have brought" because this entire process has been short-circuited, cut off, blocked by the actions of the distinguished majority leader. I find that very regrettable.

Whatever side of the debate we are on, whatever we think about this bill, it is beyond debate that this is enormously significant legislation that would have dramatic impacts on our economy. I believe it is the most significant bill that would have the most drastic and dramatic impacts on our economy of any since I have come to the Senate, which has only been about 3 years, but we have considered a lot of bills. Yet we are operating, apparently, under a procedure now where not one amendment will be considered before the significant cloture vote tomorrow morning. The distinguished majority leader has filled the amendment tree, so not a single amendment could ever be considered without his acquiescence and consent. That is flat out ludicrous. That is flat out offensive.

I came to the Senate from the House. In doing so, I heard from so many different sources so many stories, so many examples of how the Senate is a place of great unlimited debate; the ability to bring ideas and amendments to the Senate floor on the big issues of the day, in contrast to the House. Unfortunately, our distinguished majority leader has turned that on its head. He has made that exactly the reverse, where debate is completely shut down, where we have no amendments possible to be considered before the cloture vote on the most dramatic and significant bill to impact our economy that I have been able to consider here in the Senate. That is ludicrous.

On this topic, former Vice President Al Gore made a very famous movie: "An Inconvenient Truth." I ask what the distinguished majority leader is afraid of. Why not have a full debate. He seems to be concerned about an inconvenient debate or a series of inconvenient amendments. Again, I express extreme regret that we are having a

cloture vote tomorrow morning before a single amendment is called up on the floor to be debated, before there is any opportunity—any security—for amendments to be considered, at least unless they have the majority leader's acquiescence and support.

I would have called up at least three amendments. These three amendments go to the heart of my concerns about the legislation. When I look at virtually all legislation, I look at the costs of the legislation and the benefits, and I ask: Do the benefits outweigh the costs. In this case, I believe the costs are very severe. First, costs relating to gasoline. The Louisianans whom I represent, as Americans are all over the country, are struggling under the weight of enormously high gasoline prices right now. They have risen from about \$2.33 when this Congress came into office, to almost \$4 at the pump now. Yet this bill could increase that burden significantly by as much as a dollar a gallon. That is a big cost.

I also look at the cost of other energy prices: natural gas prices, electricity prices. Again, that is a big additional cost this bill would be putting on American citizens.

Finally, I look at the cost of shipping more jobs overseas, because this bill would put dramatic onerous controls on American industry, American businesses, and American jobs, but wouldn't do anything comparable with regard to jobs overseas, including China and India. Those are big costs. The benefit? Well, the benefit, I believe, would be slim to none because of the factors I have mentioned, because of what this bill would do to burden our industry, our companies, our jobs. Those jobs would be pushed overseas, largely to countries without these controls—to countries that would not change their policies, that would not follow our lead, particularly China and India.

So what would we do with regard to the global issue of climate change? It is certainly global and not localized. We would be accomplishing virtually nothing.

My amendments, had I been allowed to offer them, would have addressed these onerous costs. First, I would have presented an amendment that said if the price of gasoline at the pump reaches \$5 a gallon—forget about \$4 where we are already—if it reaches \$5 a gallon, then we would allow exploration and activity on our ocean bottoms off our coasts, but only under two conditions: first, if the host State off whose coast that activity would happen would want the activity; the Governor and the State legislature of that State would say yes, we want this activity off our coast, we want to help meet the Nation's energy needs. Secondly, if that happened, that State would get a fair revenue share—37.5 percent—building off the precedent we set 2 years ago with revenue sharing in the Gulf of Mexico; and important Federal programs and important Federal

priorities, such as LIHEAP and the Highway thrust Fund and the Adam Walsh Act, would also get guaranteed funding. That is a significant and important amendment that should be part of this debate.

My second amendment would discuss electricity prices, particularly natural gas, and it would say that if natural gas demand went up, if the price went up because of this bill, then again it would pull a trigger and allow that exploration and production on our ocean bottoms off our coasts under the same conditions that I outlined with regard to host States.

Finally, my third amendment would address the significant jobs cost that this bill presents. Natural gas-intensive sectors of our manufacturing industry would be particularly hard hit by this bill. So my amendment, had I been allowed to present it, would have said that we will have annual reports describing whether this bill would displace more than 5,000 employees in natural gas-intensive sectors of the manufacturing industry such as the fertilizer industry, the pharmaceutical industry, the chemical industry. If that happened, if we went over that threshold, then the EPA Administrator, in consultation with the Secretary of Labor, would have to increase the number of allowances necessary to preserve those jobs.

Those are important topics in this debate. Yet they were completely shut out from consideration on the Senate floor. Once again, I have enormous regret and concern for this body based on the precedent the distinguished majority leader has set. This is an enormously important topic and bill, yet not allowing a single amendment to be called up and considered before our vote on cloture tomorrow morning, and filling the amendment tree so not a single amendment could ever be considered without the acquiescence and support of the majority leader himself.

As I said a few minutes ago, Al Gore talked about an inconvenient truth. I believe the majority leader is concerned about an inconvenient debate, inconvenient amendments, but that is exactly what the American people deserve: a full and fair debate and consideration of amendments.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I think it is very clear. Our speakers—myself included—all we are asking for is to debate our amendments and get votes on our amendments.

I now yield to Senator CORKER from Tennessee 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mr. CORKER. Madam President, if the Chair could let me know when there is 2 minutes left on my time, I would appreciate it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will be so notified.

Mr. CORKER. Madam President, thank you very much for the opportunity to rise and speak about the Climate Security Act. I think all of us realize what is getting ready to happen.